

AGENDA
Recreational Abalone Advisory Committee (RAAC)
Saturday, November 4, 2006
10:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

Location: Cesar E. Chavez Branch Library
3301 E. 12th St. Suite 271
Oakland, CA 94601

Contact Persons: Konstantin Karpov, Senior Marine Biologist, 19160 S. Harbor Drive, Fort Bragg, CA 95437
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Committee Web Page: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mrd/raac/>

1. 10:00 to 10:10 **Introductions –Announcements and Review of minutes** (Karpov)
2. 10:10 to 10:30 **WLP report 2005-2006 activities** (Riske)
3. 10:30 to 10:45 **Proposed Budget 2006-2007** (Taniguchi)

Break [10:45-11:00]

4. 11:00 – 11:45 **Abalone fishery assessments Updates (15 min each)**

Fishery Index Sites Surveys (Kashiwada and Rogers-Bennett)

Abalone Recruitment Modules (Rogers-Bennett)

San Miguel Island Red Abalone Snap Shot Survey (Taniguchi)

11:45 to 12:15 **RAAC and (time permitting) guest questions to speakers.**

Lunch [12:15 to 13:00]

5. [13:00 to 14:00] **San Miguel Island red abalone limited fishery feasibility process** (Colgate)
6. [14:00 to 14:45] **Abalone tag versus punch card system discussion** (Pogre)
7. [14:45 to 15:30] **RAAC involvement and interaction with SMI process and AAG**
8. [15:30 to 15:45] **Other Business**
9. [15:45 to 16:25] **Public Expression** (non-agenda items, please limit to 3 minutes per person)

[16:30] **Adjournment**

Minutes
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Oakland, CA. 94601

RAAC Members Present: Konstantin Karpov, Steve Campi, John Colgate, Lt. Steve Riske, Rocky Daniels, Richard Pogre, Steve Benavides, Brooke Halsey (Member-Elect).

Absent: Dr. Paul Dayton

Others Present: DFG staff - Ian Taniguchi, Jerry Kashiwada, Dr. Laura Rogers Bennett, Dr. Jim Moore, Lucy Johnson, Sean Hoobler. Members of the public – Pete Haaker, Carol Rose, Brian Ishida, Ray Lewis.

1. Introduction and approval of last meeting minutes

Karpov opened the meeting. Members of the committee introduced themselves. John Colgate said he would be stepping down and introduced Chris Voss as his replacement. Campi briefly outlined the role of RAAC as an advisory body which makes recommendations to the Director of the Department of Fish and Game. Karpov briefly went over the minutes of the last meeting and asked for any clarification or additions. The only change suggested was a correction to the spelling of Steve Benavides name. The minutes of the last meeting were approved with the new correction.

2. Enforcement report 2005-2006 activities

Riske gave the enforcement report and distributed copies of the report. Cash overtime allotted for abalone was \$50,000 for uniform patrol and \$16,000 for SOU.

Riske reported that there some busy tide series this year – especially Memorial Day Weekend with a good minus tide which brought a lot of people to the coast. What appears to be up this year is the number of divers late in the season and the number of late season divers with new cards. Generally the spring months are when most people are taking abalone.

The most frequent violation is with abalone permit report cards. Digital cameras purchased through funds received from Sonoma County Abalone Network (SCAN) and the Sonoma County fines commission were used by enforcement personnel to take pictures of cards to record numbers of abalone reported on the card. The pictures are used to establish whether cards were altered in subsequent contacts.

Besides report card violations the other common enforcement problem is over limits. The most common of these types of infractions involves groups of divers where experienced divers are taking their limits and the limits for the other less experienced divers. This activity was more common this year after declining in frequency the past few years.

The Automated License Data System (ALDS) is projected to begin license sales in December 2007. The ALDS will automate the issuance, accounting and management functions associated with selling recreational licenses. The ALDS will automatically enter buyer information into the system and identify previous purchases of licenses or permits such as the abalone card. The system should help curb the purchase of multiple abalone permit report cards.

Lieutenant Riske related some cases from this year.

SOU continued to work the coast this year and has found some poachers were using rental cars to avoid having their own cars confiscated. Illegally commercialized abalone are sold for up to \$100 each.

Four abalone checkpoints were conducted this year - two in Sonoma County and two in Mendocino County. Data was summarized in the handout provided. Data on total enforcement effort was also in the handout.

The public remains a valuable source of information on violations. In addition to providing assistance in watching over the abalone resource, SCAN provided funds to purchase two outboard motors for a patrol vessel allowing better enforcement coverage up the coast.

Daniels inquired about RAAC making a recommendation to the Director to increase warden salaries to reduce disparity between wardens and other peace officers. There was no opposition and Daniels would work on the wording of the recommendation. The discussion was continued just before the lunch break.

The final wording for the recommendation is: "The cost of living in much of California means wildlife enforcement officers' salaries are not living wages for those areas. This is a situation that will only get worse and is having a material adverse effect on the resource. RAAC recommends to the Director that wages for wildlife protection officers be made commensurate with other state peace officers." Recommendation was passed without opposition.

3. Proposed Budget 2006-2007.

Taniguchi went over the 05/06 final abalone budget and the 06/07 straw budget which were given as handouts to RAAC. Money spent to 6/30/06 was \$603,000 out of an allotment of \$684,000. During the year, the allotment was increased to cover salaries of Laura Rogers-Bennett, Pete Haaker, and 20 % of Kon Karpov's time. The annual projected income is approximately \$530,000.

For 2006-2007, Rogers-Bennett, Haaker and Karpov are permanently added to the budget. A new item in the budget is warden vessel support time to cover costs for using warden vessels during index site surveys.

Karpov wanted clarification that warden overtime was not fully expended for 2005-2006. Taniguchi and Johnson replied some of the overtime in June may not have been included, some of the overtime might have been coded to the SOU allotment which was overspent and there may be some coding corrections that will occur if timesheets were coded after the 15th of the month. Karpov commented that with the administrative overhead which was not available, there may be another \$30,000 that could be added to the expenditures and the total could be as high as \$650,000 which would still be under the allotment. Riske said when wardens come from out of the area, he doesn't always see their timesheets

and what is charged to overtime. Riske said he allows 8 hr overtime for wardens who come from out of the area and they may not always claim the overtime or even code it correctly.

Taniguchi said the 06/07 budget allotment is \$684,000 and the projected expenditures are \$508,000 which gives some leeway as far as things which may come up. The prudent reserve is around \$1,000,000.

Daniels asked if there were any biologists working on abalone that were not covered by RAAC funds. Taniguchi said with the restructuring of the Marine Region, there is no longer an abalone mandate and we can now draw on biologists in the Invertebrate Project to do work. The additional positions in the RAAC budget resulted from the need to reduce staff on Fish and Game Preservation Funds. Daniels said it appears Abalone Stamp Fund is now paying for the northern California recreational fishery and an awful lot of the assessment work in southern California. Taniguchi said under the new structure, positions are not geographically supervised and are tied to the project. Karpov pointed out that Taniguchi recently helped with surveys in the north. The recent assessment at San Miguel largely was covered by commercial abalone funds. Riske asked if the number of biologists now covered by abalone stamp funds was permanent or would return to previous numbers when Department budget is back on track. Karpov said the budget is the best that could be put together and the future is uncertain. Daniels asked for total expenditure on abalone. Taniguchi will try to get a ball park estimate.

4. Abalone fishery assessments Updates

- **Fishery Index Sites Surveys (Kashiwada and Rogers-Bennett)**

Kashiwada presented an update on dive surveys to fulfill established guidelines for fishery management under the ARMP. Eight index sites are to be surveyed over a three year period. This year the Department conducted dive surveys to complete transects at Timber Cove, Fort Ross, and Todds Point. Rogers-Bennett managed a contract with UC Davis which provided divers needed to complete the surveys. The contract divers were necessary because very few Department divers were available to help with the surveys.

Kashiwada described the survey protocol which is comparable to past surveys and the ARMP decision table based on surveys conducted in 1999-2000. The average densities for seven sites recently surveyed are close to the sustainable fishery densities in the ARMP. He presented data on size frequency weighted by density for the sites surveyed in the past year. The general lack of small abalone at all of the sites is troubling.

Answering a question on how transect sites were picked, Kashiwada said the three recent index sites had randomly picked transects but rough weather conditions during the dates boats were available often restricted transects to more sheltered locations.

- **Abalone Recruitment Modules (Rogers-Bennett)**

Rogers-Bennett presented a summary of abalone reproduction work on the north coast and abalone recruitment work done with artificial modules in northern and southern California. Reproduction work consists of sampling sport catch three times a year at Van Damme and a collection in the winter when the fishery is closed.

A high gonad index followed by low is an indication of building up the gonad until spawning. Some of the spawning peaks coincide with the warmest time of the year which is in January as recorded by temperature loggers. There is a significant positive relationship between the ENSO index and the female reproductive index. The value of the data set will become greater the more sampling we do.

Rogers-Bennett also reported on the recruitment monitoring study using ARMs deployed in Van Damme. So far 2005 has been the biggest year for recruitment of juvenile abalone (< 50 mm size) in the ARMs (a total of 51 abalone). The longer the time series goes, we are hoping to see more patterns and be able to link these patterns to physical parameters in the ocean. In southern California the Kelp Forest Monitoring program monitors 82 ARMs spread out across three islands compared to the 12 modules in the north. In 2006 there were six abalone in the southern California ARMs. In 1990 they found 161 abalone in the southern ARMs and this recruitment has been slowly declining every few years. The islands with ARMs are San Miguel, Santa Cruz, and Anacapa. Northern ARMs have 33 times more abalone compared to those in the south. Abalone reproduction in northern California linked to ocean condition indices. Abalone modules can be used to track year class strength in fisheries. Recruitment collapse has occurred for abalone in most of southern California, but not SMI. Recruitment levels in abundant populations can help set recovery criteria for recovering populations.

- **San Miguel Island Red Abalone Snap Shot Survey (Taniguchi)**

Taniguchi gave the powerpoint update made to the Fish and Game Commission in October and showed a video made of the survey. Over 50 divers worked the survey in ten boats. Besides the data collection, the survey provided an opportunity for collaboration between multiple agencies. Random survey stations were picked based on multi-year kelp coverage. The **Conception** was chartered and used as the base of operations. Abalone and physical habitat data has been entered into an Access database. A brief data analysis will go the Abalone Advisory Group scheduled for a workshop December 1 & 2 in Santa Barbara and the RAAC. Size frequency data showed 62% greater than recreational size of 7 inches and 38% greater than the historic commercial legal size of 7 ¾ inches. Abalone concentrations were seen at two sites – off Crook Point and the Miracle Mile. A data summary report and a cruise report will be distributed soon.

The discussion following the presentations clarified sampling procedures. Generally two transects in different directions were done at each random location by the same dive team. Occasionally locations were duplicated. Survey data allows comparisons between the different participant groups.

LUNCH BREAK

4. Abalone fishery assessments Updates (continued)

- **Abalone Pathology (Moore)**

Moore provided a written handout on the pathology update and briefly covered some highlights after the lunch break while waiting for RAAC members to return from lunch. He said Withering Syndrome (WS) has reached as far north as San Mateo County. Over 600 abalone have been sampled from Van Damme since the year 2000 and none had the bacteria which causes WS. Methods have been developed to detect the WS bacteria in necrotic tissue and he encourages people to freeze tissue of abalone suspected of having WS and sending it to the Bodega Marine Lab.

Moore said the sabellid worm which was introduced to abalone farms from South Africa has been eradicated from an intertidal site near a Cayucos abalone farm. Karpov asked about an Australian herpes virus which became a problem in culture facilities and has spread to the wild. Moore is concerned that current regulations allow importation of live abalone for the terminal market from anywhere in the world. He is working to amend the law to require a permit to import live abalone. The herpes virus kills abalone within a few weeks which is quicker than WS.

5. San Miguel Island red abalone limited fishery feasibility process (Voss and Colgate)

Voss provided background on the Fish and Game Commission's interest in examining the possibility of a limited red abalone fishery on San Miguel Island. A proposal for the fishery is available on line through the AAG (Abalone Advisory Group). Part of the process would be to get a baseline understanding of the number of abalone on the island and develop an intelligent TAC (Total Allowable Catch) for the island. The TAC would be allocated between commercial and recreational fishermen. An ITQ (Individual Transferable Quota) is used in many countries to manage fisheries and is the next logical step in a comprehensive and rational management plan.

In the discussion following the background presentation, Voss said the Farallon Islands were not part of the proposal but if the fishery is successful on San Miguel, the principles might be applied to the Farallons.

Campi said the ARMP covers a wide range of options but he would mainly like to see area-wide recovery before fishing was resumed.

Translocation and outplanting as methods to enhance abalone populations were discussed. Voss believed translocation did not provide a net gain. Pogre believed outplanting has been put on hold for the past decade and need to be resumed.

Benavides said more of abalone funds should be directed to reestablishment of abalone populations in southern California. He believes the potential fishery focuses on an incredibly small area and fishing during recovery is anathema. His biggest concern is that an incredible amount of money, time and resources is being spent on something that is way premature.

6. Abalone tag versus punch card system discussion (Voss and Pogre)

Voss acknowledged there were numerous problems which needed to be solved for using tags. Karpov asked what the incentive was for having tags in the recreational fishery from the commercial fishermen viewpoint and if the tags were linked to the use of tags in the proposed fishery at San Miguel. Colgate said there is no link. Voss said the link was working out the “bugs” for the San Miguel fishery could allow tags to be used for the recreational fishery.

Colgate said some measures need to be taken in preparation for the creation of marine reserves in northern California which could close up to 25% of the area to fishing and would cause concentration of effort into the remaining area.

Halsey said there is no problem regarding report cards but rather with the database surrounding the report cards. We need to work with what we have and need better data collection and availability for enforcement. California is way behind in the data collection compared to other states.

Karpov said the Department is moving toward a data rich environment with a group dedicated to SCUBA based assessment. Marine Region leaders envision ecosystem based assessment for abalone, urchin and finfish together. We are ahead of the game in northern California. The data set for San Miguel is a start but should be part of a time series that would give us the power to discriminate what is happening. Fishery management is much more practical in a data rich environment. If this is a think-tank exercise, it might be better applied to another fishery like sea urchins.

Voss said the TAC might be too high to be supported by current populations on San Miguel but determining the TAC will be a valuable exercise.

Benavides is opposed to opening a fishery on the last remnant population of abalone in southern California and to fishing before stocks are recovered. Translocation of mature adult abalone is the only technique that shows potential to be a recovery enhancement technique. He would prefer to see whatever abalone that could be removed from San Miguel to be translocated to rebuild populations in other areas rather than taken to market. He believes the exercise of developing an abalone fishery should be done at some point but doing it now is a waste of time and resources.

Voss replied that delaying fishery planning would stifle an opportunity to explore some incredible concepts.

Discussion on tags resumed after the AAG discussion. Riske said tags and some type of card could help but could not say whether it would help enough to offset the cost. Halsey said the tag needs to follow the meat of the abalone all the way through the process. Riske said the ALDS would not be able to produce the

tags but could produce numbers assigned to tags and wardens in the field would be able to see who the tag numbers were issued to through their dispatch center. Pogre said the punch card is ineffective since many people avoid filling out cards but tags would be easier to check.

Benavides moved that a subcommittee would look into methods to enhance the enforcement and regulation of abalone harvest in northern California. Tags would be one option but other methods could be explored. Richard Pogre, Warden Dennis McKiver, Ed Schultze, and Brooke Halsey are subcommittee members.

7. RAAC involvement and interaction with SMI process and AAG

Karpov outlined the agenda for the December 1 - 2 AAG meeting in Santa Barbara and wanted a discussion on participation by RAAC. Voss explained RAAC is invited as a member of the public. Haaker wanted to know if there was a recreational representative on AAG. Voss replied Bill Bernard, James Hrabak, and Chip Bissell. Johnson asked if there was an enforcement representative and Voss replied it was an oversight. Taniguchi said the AAG makes recommendations to the Commission while RAAC makes recommendations to the Director and the AAG process needs to be transparent to RAAC. Halsey made a motion that a RAAC member would attend the AAG workshop. Benavides and Campi indicated they would attend. Karpov said a motion would not be necessary since RAAC members plan to attend and suggested a follow-up telephone meeting to allow other Committee provide input on the AAG process. Campi suggested RAAC members attending AAG meetings could post a report on the RAAC list-serve. Campi moved that RAAC members attending the AAG meeting be supported if they wish to be. Daniels seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

8. Other Business

Next meeting would be October 20, 2007 at the same location. John Colgate will be resigning from the RAAC and suggests Christopher Voss as his replacement. Karpov pointed out there would need to be a nominating and approval process to appoint a new member.

Colgate read an announcement of a NOAA Fisheries Endangered Species Act status review of the black abalone. NOAA is seeking information on long-term abundance, potential factors for decline, status of Mexican black abalone fishery, implication of low population size, factors important for black abalone management, current estimate of population size and available habitat, knowledge of life history parameters and projections on population growth or decline and risk of extinction.

9. Public Comment

- **Brian Ishida**

Sport Diver. Would like better public notice of RAAC or similar meetings and would like to see simpler, more complete identification during purchase of abalone cards perhaps through magnetic sensors.

- **Sean Hoobler**

Sport Diver. Would like RAAC to explore the possibility of making a recommendation to clarify the language on reporting abalone taken on Free Fishing Day. There is a large loophole in what is required on Free Fishing Day. Licenses are not required but it is not clear that punch cards must be punched on Free Fishing Day. Information is being lost if people are not recording catch that day.

Meeting Adjournment